

**TONY  
WALTER**



# Walloon, Flemish; there is a difference

**A**dmittedly, I used to assume that anytime someone mentioned Belgians, it was the prelude to a punch line.

How many Belgians does it take ...?

That sort of ethnic ignorance probably came from some bias that had no validity, but provided an easy mark for any of us who weren't Belgian and were glad the jokes didn't expose our own heritage to ridicule.

## **Flemish in the World**

So along comes Dr. Joseph Binard, Belgium-born, and now an American citizen who was a U.S. Navy officer and a successful urologist in Florida.

Binard settled into a farm near Brussels (our Brussels, not the one over there) six years ago, served as temporary director of the Oneida Health Clinic for awhile, but is otherwise retired.

He has taken on what he feels is an assignment from the fatherland to form an association over here called Vlamingen in de Wereld (VIW) to bring people of Belgian descent together.

But here's the educational kicker. VIW, in English, means Flemish in the World, and not all Belgians are Flemish.

Didn't know that, did you? I didn't either.

Well, the college course I never took would have informed me that Belgium was formed fewer than 200 years ago when the Flemish and Walloons combined their cultures to make a country.

The Walloon-Belgians leaned toward the French language, while the Flemish-Belgians leaned toward the Dutch.

The Walloons were more into agriculture, the Flemish more into trades.

According to Binard, the Flemish were more conservative, the Walloons more liberal.

He says the Belgians in the Green Bay area are mostly of Flemish heritage, while those in the Brussels-Namur region of southern Door County are mostly Walloon.

## **Flying the flag**

A tip-off is the flag that many Belgian families display.

If it's a yellow flag with a red rooster, those are Walloons. If it's a yellow flag with a black lining, it's Flemish.

Just so you know, the two factions aren't at odds.

The Belgian Club that meets monthly in southern Door County is mostly Walloon, but Binard is a member and other Flemish attend.

It's pride in his heritage that is pushing Binard to organize a VIW. He sees the group promoting investments in Flemish business, support for students who want to travel to Belgium and a vehicle to just get together and have some Belgian beer.

If you have the appropriate pedigree and want to join, contact Binard at [drjbinard@earthlink.net](mailto:drjbinard@earthlink.net).

But what about the Belgian jokes? Must be grating, huh?

"Oh, if you can't laugh at yourself, you haven't grown up," said Binard. "In Belgium, we used the Dutch and Poles and the Scots for jokes."